

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PE, CU

SUBJECT: PRESS STORY ON CUBANS IN PERU

REFERENCE: STATE 233722

TEXT FOLLOWS OF "DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS DAILY" REPORT
CITED REFTTEL, ON 3,500 CUBANS ALLEGEDLY EN ROUTE TO PERU.
REPORT, DATED SEPTEMBER 15, HAS BEEN FORMALLY DENIED BY
GOP. USG HAS NO CONFIRMATION OF SUCH PRESENCE IN PERU.

A. QUOTE US GOVERNMENT SOURCES HAVE RELUCTANTLY CONFIRMED
RECENT WASHINGTON RUMORS THAT CUBAN TROOPS, OF AN UNDIS-
CLOSED NUMBER, HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED IN PANAMA. THE FIRST
UNOFFICIAL REPORTS OF A CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE AREA
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CAME FROM A COMMERCIAL PILOT WHO CLAIMED TO HAVE OBSERVED

A SOVIET TRANSPORTER, ON TWO OCCASIONS, AT A REMOTE AIR-FIELD USED FOR "TOUCH AND GO" PRACTICE, BUT OTHERWISE THOUGHT TO BE DESERTED. THE FIRST OBSERVATION WAS DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS WHEN A LARGE GROUP OF MEN IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES BUT DISEMBARKING IN MILITARY FORMATION, WERE SEEN. THE SECOND SIGHTING WAS DURING EVENING HOURS WHEN TROOPS, OUTFITTED WITH JUNGLE UNIFORMS AND CARRYING WEAPONS, WERE UNLOADED FROM A SIMILAR TRANSPORTER.

B. COINCIDING WITH THIS REPORT WAS INFORMATION FROM OTHER RELIABLE SOURCES THAT BLACKS IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES HAD BEEN SEEN AT RESTAURANTS AND SHOPS IN A MAJOR CITY IN PANAMA. THESE GROUPS ARE THOUGHT TO BE ANGOLAN TROOPS IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THEY SPEAK PORTUGUESE.

C. US INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS IN THE CANAL ZONE HAVE REPORT-EDLY BEEN INSTRUCTED NOT TO COMMENT ON THESE SIGHTINGS. HOWEVER, UPON BEING CONFRONTED WITH THE INFORMATION, ONE US GOVERNMENT SOURCE INDICATED THAT CUBAN TROOPS ARE KNOWN TO BE IN TRANSIT TO PERU VIA SHUTTLE BASES IN PANAMA. CIVILIAN OBSERVERS CLAIM THAT SOME 3,500 CUBAN COMBAT TROOPS

HAVE BEEN SECRETLY FLOWN INTO THE ZONE. WASHINGTON SOURCES OFFER NO CONFIRMATION THAT THESE FORCES ARE TO BE LEFT IN PANAMA.

D. IF, IN FACT, THE TROOPS ARE EARMARKED FOR PERU, IT COULD BE FOR ONE OF THREE REASONS: (1) TO UPGRADE PERUVIAN FORCES IN THE EVENT OF HOSTILITIES WITH CHILE. THERE ARE ALREADY SEVERAL HUNDRED CUBANS IN PERU, MOSTLY IN THE MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE FIELDS. (2) TO ASSIST THE PERUVIAN AIR FORCE WHEN IT RECEIVES ITS RECENTLY-PLACED ORDER FOR 36 SUKHOI SU-22 AIRCRAFT. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE PERUVIANS WILL BE ABLE TO HANDLE THIS ADVANCED AIRCRAFT SINGLE-HANDEDLY AND THE CUBANS MAY BE EN ROUTE TO BEGIN SOME INTENSIVE INSTRUCTION. THE CUBANS WOULD BE A GOOD CHOICE AS THEY ARE EXPERIENCED ON SU-19S. (3) TO ENSURE THAT PRESIDENT GENERAL FRANCISCO MORALES BERMUDEZ DOES NOT MOVE TOO FAR TO THE RIGHT. PRESIDENT MORALES HAS APPEARED TO THREATEN THIS WITH RECENT MOVES AGAINST RADICAL PERU-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VIAN ELEMENTS BOTH WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES AND THE POPULATION. THE PRESIDENT'S LATEST CENSURE OF THE LEFT -- THE REMOVAL OF PRIME MINISTER FERNANDEZ MALDONADO -- COULD NOT HAVE GONE UNNOTICED IN EITHER MOSCOW OR HAVANA. UNQUOTE.

HABIB

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